

XXXIII.—*Notes and Extracts.*

*Capt. Boyd Alexander's Expedition.*—We have heard nothing direct from Capt. Alexander lately, but there is an account of his journey across Northern Nigeria from Loko on the Benué to Yo, near the shores of Lake Chad, in the 'Times' of May 11th last and in the June number of the 'Geographical Journal.' At the beginning of February Capt. Alexander was proposing to continue his transit of Africa by ascending the valley of the River Shari, and then striking across to Mahagi on the shore of Lake Albert. As his Portuguese collector is still with him, Capt. Alexander is sure to bring home a good series of birds, amongst which, as his route has not previously been traversed, there will be probably many novelties.

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*Mr. Bates's return to Camaroon.*—Mr. George L. Bates, whose interesting field-notes on the birds of Cameroon we have published in connexion with Dr. Bowdler Sharpe's papers on his collections, returned from a holiday in the U.S. last month, and after a short stay in London left again for Camaroon to continue his researches in the Natural History of that German Colony. On this occasion Mr. Bates is accompanied by Robertson, lately in the Zoological Society's service, who will take charge of any Anthropoid Apes or other living animals that Mr. Bates may be able to obtain.

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*The Museum of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.*—In the report of the Officers of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia for 1904 we are pleased to see it announced by Mr. Witmer Stone, the Conservator of the "Ornithological Section," that the collections of the Academy "were never in better condition nor more accessible to the student than they are at present." Many additions have been made during the past year, amongst which is a series of 300 Philippine birds and collections from the West Indies, Colorado, and California.

As regards the scientific importance of this famous Museum, see our remarks in this Journal for 1899 (p. 654).

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*Can Birds smell?*—Dr. Alex. Hill, of Cambridge, writing in 'Nature' (vol. 71, p. 318, Feb. 2nd, 1905), maintains that the sense of smell must be but little developed in Birds. "The olfactory bulbs are small." But he asks for more information about *Apteryx*, in which Owen has stated that the turbinated bones are extensive and complicated. To this question Professor Benham, of Otago ('Nature,' vol. 72, p. 64), replies that several points concerning the structure and habits of the Kiwi suggest that its sense of smell is highly developed. The nostrils, instead of being at the base of the beak, are at the extreme tip and on the under-surface. The olfactory sacs, with their complex of turbinals, extend so far back as to project into the orbits, the eyes being separated by them instead of by a thin bony interorbital septum. The eyes of the bird are small and inefficient, notwithstanding its nocturnal habits, and observers state that the Kiwi seeks its food by its sense of smell or hearing. In searching for food the bird thrusts its beak into moss, piles of leaves, or holes in the ground, and assumes an attitude suggestive of trying to obtain evidence of the presence of food either by smell or by listening for the sound of movements made by a worm. These statements suggest the probability of a well-developed sense of smell in the Kiwi, and Prof. Benham hopes to have experiments carried out on *Apteryx*, *Ocydromus*, and *Stringops*, in order to obtain further evidence upon the matter.

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*The Systematic Position of the Eurylæmidæ.*—At the Meeting of the Zoological Society of London on May 3rd last, Mr. W. P. Pyecraft, F.Z.S., read a paper on the Osteology of the *Eurylæmidæ*, and briefly discussed the question of the systematic position of that group. While agreeing with the general consensus of opinion as to the primitive character of these birds, he held that the isolated position which they are supposed to occupy with regard to the remaining

Passeres is by no means justified by facts. The pterylography, osteology, and myology of the *Eurylæmidæ* all tended to shew that the nearest allies of these birds were the *Cotingidæ*. Although undoubtedly primitive, the group, Mr. Pycraft pointed out, presented a number of specialised characters, which were especially marked in the skull and in the muscles of the wing.

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*Birds of the Tibetan Expedition.*—Capt. H. J. Walton, of the Indian Medical Service, who, as we stated (see above, p. 293), accompanied the expedition to Lhasa as Naturalist, has arrived in London, and is engaged in working out his collections at the Natural History Museum. He has brought from the district round the Tibetan capital a good series of birds, some 500 in number, referable to, perhaps, 120 species, amongst which are some interesting novelties. We are pleased to be able to state that Capt. Walton is engaged in preparing a memoir on this interesting collection for publication in this Journal.

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*The Fourth International Ornithological Congress.*—The Fourth International Ornithological Congress (see above, pp. 144, 292) commenced its sittings at South Kensington on June 12th and continued them to the end of the week. We hope to be able to give an account of its proceedings in our next number.

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*Retrospective Priority in Nomenclature.*—In his Presidential Address to the Geologists' Association (Proc. Geol. Assoc. xix. p. 70) Dr. A. Smith Woodward has boldly stated his opinion that "since the fatuous fad of retrospective priority became fashionable the naming of certain groups has lapsed into inextricable confusion, and that until common sense methods prevailed a serious obstacle was thus opposed to real scientific work."